

**Written Testimony Submitted April 2, 2014
To The U.S. House of Representatives
Appropriations Interior Sub-Committee
Marlene MacEwan (Testifying Witness on April 10, 2014)
Cancer Survivors Against Radon**

Marlene MacEwan, widow of a non-smoker, retired Tax Accountant, Treasurer, CanSAR (Cancer Survivors Against Radon) www.cansar.org

My testimony concerns the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the following budget items.

Radon Categorical Grants (Pg 732) (FY 2015 PB: \$0.0M, FY 2013 Actual \$7.32; FY 2014 Enacted: \$8.05 M , FY 2015 Change: -\$8.0M) And FY 2014 Proposed Budget Cuts (Cuts rejected by Congress in the Omnibus Act, 2014) to 11.9 Regional FTE's that oversee the SIRG grant processes in EPA Regional Offices. Opposing this cut.

Environmental Program Management: (Pg 531) [FY 2013 Actual \$3.M; FY 2014 Enacted: \$2.36 M; FY 2015 Proposed: \$3.36 Change: \$1.0 M]

Science & Technology (Pg 101) [FY13 \$56.7 (Thousands) FY 2014 \$198.0; PB \$0.0; Difference (\$198.0)] Opposing this cut.

I submit this written testimony on behalf of my late husband, Bob, who no longer has a voice to speak out about Radon as he lost his battle to Radon induced lung cancer over 9 years ago. We had never heard of radon. I also submit this on behalf of Cancer Survivors Against Radon, a non-profit educational organization.

To the best of my knowledge, the organization I represent, Cancer Survivors Against Radon has, to date, never received federal funding under these budget items. CanSAR is made up of the few survivors and families of non-survivors who are speaking out against radon induced lung cancer.

Bob's painful and shocking cancer diagnosis

Bob, a non-smoker, was diagnosed with late stage lung cancer on July 24, 2003. He was a healthy 48-year-old father of four. We were devastated! How could this happen to us? We were an average middle class family that lived a good, clean life, watched what we ate and exercised regularly. Bob was rarely ever ill. His oncologist and pulmonary specialist estimated that the cancer had been in his body for over 2 years, which allowed the cancer to widely metastasize. Bob read that Radon exposure is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and the second leading cause among smokers. Bob found a test kit at Home Depot for \$12.00, including the lab test, and we tested our home.

EPA Informed Us Our Area in Oregon Was Safe

I called the EPA to ask about Radon. They asked where we lived. Upon telling them Lake Oswego, Oregon, I was told that the average Radon level in our area was only 1.8pCi/L, and the EPA action was 4pCi/L.

Our home tested at 57.2pCi/L, more than 14 times the EPA action level. Losing my husband has been devastating. Our future together and with our family was gone in a moment. Bob lost everything and everyone in that same moment, an awful tragedy that has taken its toll on us all and will be with us for the rest of our lives.

Radon awareness would have saved Bob's life: Mandatory Testing Would Save More

Why is the EPA closing down State Radon Programs? Bob could have lived if we would have had any idea about Radon. When we bought our house in 1991, we did all the necessary tests and inspections that go along with real estate. Unfortunately, Radon testing is not one of them; in fact, in 1991 it was not even offered to us as a possibility. Today, because of Radon awareness, Radon testing is often recommended as an optional test during the inspection process. Even with these recommendations, most homes are untested. Mandatory testing and mitigation is necessary for our homes and places of work and learning to be at safe levels and save lives.

Bob's Untimely death

Bob lived for 15 months and 10 days after diagnosis. His death has been a major loss for me, my children, Bob's parents, his brother, our one grandchild and friends. I now have 7 grandchildren, 6 of which Bob will never be able to hold or share their lives. This tragedy could have been avoided.

Lung Cancer kills more people than breast, prostate, colon and pancreatic cancers combined

Radon kills more Americans (21,000) each year than AIDS (17,000), drunk driving (10,839), drowning (3,650), home fires (3,500) or second hand smoke (3,400)! Radon kills 55 American each day, twice as many women as breast cancer and three times as many men as prostate cancer. In fact, lung cancer kills more people than breast, prostate, colon and pancreatic cancers combined!

Contrary to the EPA budget rationale, the State Indoor Radon Grant program is not a redundant program nor is it a duplicative program.

Given the EPA radon program's voluntary nature, SIRG is the only infrastructure that exists in the United States of America to prevent further tragedies like the one that affected my family. It impacts other Americans at a rate of 21,000 deaths each year, every year. I note that that this mortality statistic, as cold and hard as it is, is based on outdated census date of only 260 million Americans.

45 State radon programs and up to 12 tribal programs have relied and do rely on SIRG to support radon awareness and education of our citizens. Many programs provide free or low cost test kits for citizens in immediate need who cannot afford to test.

This ongoing education effort is really one of the few tools that a voluntary national program has to address a serious health risk in over 30 unregulated radon states, such as my state, Oregon. All 45 states involved with radon prevention rely on SIRG funding for public outreach.

State radon programs work with community-based University extension services, and they also partner with organizations like the American Lung Association and other health and education

service providers to make sure that consumer awareness is high and that they are able to find and locate trained service providers. This will all be lost if SIRG is not funded.

In the unregulated states of Minnesota and Colorado, SIRG funding provides the mechanism for the State Departments of Health to do outreach to citizens, to assist in training and updating certified radon professionals, and to provide consumers with listings for those certified professionals. With technical support and their own staffs and the support of industry, Minnesota and Maine (a regulated state) have created innovative policies for radon resistant new construction, addressing the problem before a home is built. Maine, Ohio and Illinois have enacted specific requirements that work to address the proper testing and mitigation of multifamily homes that adhere to the best practices of up-to-date American National Standards. Illinois, Michigan and Iowa have created specific requirements for testing and fixing day care centers.

SIRG funding also allows for technical training of local town, county, and state and code officials on the technical requirements radon and the need for radon resistant building techniques. This activity will cease without such mini grants made by states under SIRG.

Until such time as HUD and EPA create a simple mechanism for routine radon testing, the grants to states, territories and tribes are the only working mechanism to create the minimal awareness that consumers, like myself, need in advance – before we end up learning about radon for the first time in an oncologist's office.

I am also deeply concerned about the impact of not only those who lose the fight, like CanSAR founder Elizabeth Hoffman, who had testified before this committee two years ago and whose total costs exceeded \$1 Million dollars before she passed away late last year, but also the impacts to the many who survive and are not counted in that simple cold mortality statistic but have continuing medical and social costs, such as lost time at work, or even lost jobs.

On behalf of the members of CanSAR, and their families, especially those who can no longer speak to this issue, I specifically ask for the following:

1. **Radon Categorical Grants – (Page732) (FY 2015 PB: \$0.0M, FY203 Actual \$7.32; FY 2014 Enacted: \$8.05 M , FY 2015 Change: -\$8.0M)** Opposing this cut and recommending that \$14.5 Million be allocated to adjust for inflation and to increase the ability of SIRG grantees and to fund the Tribes, Territories and States. Additionally, the Regional 11.9 FTE's that oversee SIRF that were cut by EPA in the 2014 Submittal to Congress (EPA PB FY 14 was -\$1,725.0 / -11.9 FTE) needs to be reinstated if the SIRG funding is to be properly managed. Congress rejected all of the EPA FY 2014 cuts and restored this funding in the Consolidate Appropriations Act, 2014.
2. **Environmental Program Management: (Page531) [FY 2013 Actuals\$3.M; FY 2014 Enacted: \$2.36 M; FY 2015 Proposed: \$3.36 Change: \$1.0 M]** I support this allocation.
3. **Science & Technology (Pg 101 & 531) [FY13 \$56.7 (Thousands) FY 2014 \$198.0; PB \$0.0; Difference (\$198.0)]** Requesting that \$75,000 be reinstated to ensure grants to enable U.S. STAR radon chambers to inter-compare with International STAR Chambers to maintain quality assurance of reference for a national radon standard.

Together we can save precious lives!

With state public awareness programs, legislative changes for the installation of passive mitigation systems in residential and public building new construction and mandatory testing during real estate transactions, together we can save a great number of lives. Radon awareness, testing and mitigation is within our control **to** change!

Our nation needs this program to keep our citizens informed. Please reinstate the cuts to the SIRG program and the Regional Support staff so that the States and Tribes participating can do their job. I am speaking on their behalf and hoping that someday we won't have the need for a CanSAR.

Respectfully submitted,



Marlene MacEwan, Cancer Survivors Against Radon www.cansar.org
17333 SW Kinglet Dr, Sherwood, Oregon 97140 marlene@cansar.org

¹ June 3, 2008 EPA Office of Inspector Generals' Report No. 08-P-0174